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INTERVIEW
SHANE DOUGLAS

The following is the second and final part of an interview with Shane Douglas (Troy Martin) conducted via telephone from his home outside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on June 9. Since he left WCW, Douglas has been contemplating leaving the wrestling business for a future in the teaching profession.

Clark: Going back to your days in the NWA, why do you think ultimately The Dynamic Dudes tag team had a tough time getting over and then why did you wind up leaving the NWA?

Douglas: The first thing was, plain and simple, the organization. Originally, Johnny Ace and I were supposed to be called The New Generation. They were trying to captivate the same audience that The Rock & Roll Express captured, but it had grown so old that they couldn't keep that same audience captivated, or capture the new people in that age group, the tweens. When they first put us together, we wrestled on our first pay-per-view WrestleWar '89 as The New Generation. And Jim Herd, in his infinite wisdom, and I say that very sarcastically, came up with this idea for the name The Dynamic Dudes. When Eddie Gilbert first told it to me, I thought it was a rib and I laughed about it for about five minutes, and I realized that Eddie wasn't laughing with me. I said, "You're serious, aren't you?" And he said, "I'm serious as a heart attack." I went to everybody. I went to Jim Herd, I went to Ric Flair, I went to everybody that was involved in that damn booking committee. All of them, like f--kin' idiots without a brain, couldn't give me an answer. Nobody would make a decision. Ultimately, I think that was the first step that kept the Dudes down. The Dudes weren't packaged right to get over. But, the Dudes sold more gimmicks, we were second only behind Sting, but we sold more than Ric Flair, we sold more than The Road Warriors, we sold more than anybody else there. I think simply that was because there was a sector of people out there that were behind us that wanted us to be pushed. But, they'd push us for a week and then next week they'd have us get beat by somebody. There was no consistency. My point has always been, if you want to push somebody, push them, if you want to beat them, beat them, but don't mix it up because that just spins the wheels of the company. I think that's ultimately what led to the downfall of the Dudes. Plus, they sugar-coated us. I'm a wrestler by heart. I've been involved in athletics forever, and I wanted to be a wrestler. I didn't want to go out on a skateboard, but they demanded that the skateboards be used. They used that sugar-coating to the point where if I were sitting in the audience, I'd be saying, "Get these faggots out of here. I don't want to see this." So the way that they sugar-coated it and packaged it, they doomed it from the start. What ultimately led to my decision to leaving was, I simply couldn't work for people like that anymore. They had that damn booking committee and you couldn't get an answer out of anybody. It was, "Oh, go ask Jim Barnette," or "Go ask Jim Herd,"or "Go ask Jim Ross." Or you'd have to go ask Ric Flair or Jim Cornette or Kevin Sullivan. I mean, the fingers were pointing every which way but me. To me, part of leadership, and I studied management when I was in college, true leaders, true management people are the people that stand up and say, "Okay, the buck stops here. I'll take the responsibility for it. Nobody in NWA at that time would do that and it just drove me nuts to deal with people like that, small-minded, uneducated people. At that point, I told Johnny Ace and we sat down and talked about it. He didn't want me to leave. I said, "I can't stay here anymore." I couldn't go in the ring every night and do my job and do it with an enthusiasm that was expected of the Dudes to do. I just thought it was too juvenile. Let's draw the comparison. The Rock & Roll Express, they were allowed to be ass kickers. I don't think there was a person in the stands that believed that Robert Gibson or Ricky Morton were tough ass kickers. But, they were allowed to go out and exude that personna, and so the people got behind them. I mean, the people really began to believe they were ass kickers. Well, the Dudes weren't allowed to do that. The Dudes had to go out and do the wave sign and do the rip off the pants and smile to the camera. We were never allowed to show any kind of a vicious side. In fact, there were times that we were told point blank, "You were too hard in that match. Go out and do it again." The reason for that was we weren't involved again in that clique. Ric Flair, Jim Cornette and Kevin Sullivan were the big three in that clique. Pushing the Dudes didn't do a thing to keep Ric Flair, so we didn't get any support from him. Pushing the Dudes for Jim Cornette didn't do anything for him because he had his Midnight Express, so he did everything to hold us down. And Kevin Sullivan was into his stupid-ass witchcraft devil bullshit that didn't draw a dime, so he didn't do anything for us. Ultimately, the Dudes were sunk from the very beginning because we had no allies in powerful positions and they just kept us under from the very start. It's a shame because, like even Brian Pillman, the last time I was down on the road, we were talking about it and he laughed because they missed the boat on us. Because from the very first time they put us together before they started beating us, the marks were getting with us and they were believing in us, and that was evident in the fact that we were selling t-shirts more so than the world champion, more so than the world tag team champions. But, they nipped it in the butt by beating us in and out and never giving us a solid support.

Clark: Would you say one of the main reasons why the NWA/ WCW has been treading water for the past several years is because of the lack of leadership there?

Douglas: Oh my God, yes. Bill Watts came in and he tried running the

place with a strong hand. Bill Watts' problem is, he's a wrestler and not a management person. He came in and instead of saying, "Excuse me, listen, these are the decisions that need to be made," he'd come in and say, "Listen here, you mother f--ker, it's this way or you can f--kin' leave." When you tell somebody in TBS who is an educated person that, you made an enemy. And they're thinking to themselves, "What kind of asshole do we have hired here." But he was what WCW needed and he's what they need. He's a strong hand that can come in and tell people what needs to be done. The problem is, he takes it to an extreme, so he gets no support from anybody. But, yes, definitely, the problem there has been that they've got people who think they're leaders, people who want to be leaders, but when it comes time to take any heat or make a tough decision, they don't have a leader anywhere to be found. You look at Dusty Rhodes and try to think of any tough decision he ever made or put his ass on the line for any kind of heat, he never did it. Ole Anderson sure as hell won't do it. Grizzly Smith won't do it. Mike Graham won't do it. Barry Windham won't do it, he runs from heat. Ultimately, especially in a business like wrestling that is cut-throat, there are times that tough decisions need to be made and there's nobody there to make them. Ultimately, the people in TBS are the people who should be making the decisions, but they don't know a damn thing about wrestling, and they're listening to people like Dusty Rhodes. So it's really a case of the blind leading the blind and the inept leading the inept. And it's going to continue to go on. The company is not going to draw a dime. For some reason the company keeps sending me a booking sheet. I sat with my wife and laughed. I looked at the booking sheet and on some towns it's Dick Slater vs Junkyard Dog on top. And then I thought, "Who in the world is going to pay a dime to see that?" And I can answer it for you. Nobody. That's the reason they are going to have 25 people sitting in the audience and they're sinking it again. In lieu of going with the young talent that Watts had started doing, and at the time that we started seeing that, you can correlate it and see that the stands were filling up, the buildings were coming up, the numbers went up. It wasn't an overnight thing, but each time we went to a building, it went higher and higher. Now they're back on the downslide. And the only difference being is, instead of the young guys being pushed like they were, now they're bringing the Dick Slaters and the Junkyard Dogs and the Ric Flairs back. I've got nothing personally against any of those guys, but as far as being a money draw, they're beyond that.

Clark: Regarding your recent stint in WCW, many observers and wrestlers saw a tremendous improvement in your ring work during that time. What do you feel were the main reasons for your vast improvement?

Douglas: I think it was a combination of a lot of things. I think it was the fact that I've been in the business for almost nine years. I think it was the fact that I was able to learn. The fact that I was with Ricky Steamboat certainly didn't hurt. The fact that I was wrestling with some great wrestlers instead of preliminary people on a nightly basis. I think all those things certainly led to help. The sad part was, I was never really allowed to express myself fully. In this business today, it takes six months from the day that you're first seen to get over and before the people really begin to get behind you and believe in you. Ole Anderson seems to think that in six months time you're burnt out. The basic philosophical difference is of their mentality versus the mentality of other people that try to make the business go. He thinks in six months it's time for you to leave and somebody else come in. That constant overturn of talent simply means the people sitting at home never get a chance to get with anybody. Just as soon as they start to, they go, "Oh my God, now they're gone. Now I'll have to find somebody else. Okay, I'll go with this guy." And in six months, he's gone. So they really can't form any allegiances, and that's what makes people come to buildings, when they get behind somebody. Speaking from experience, when I was a mark, I grew up watching Bruno Sammartino, to me Bruno was "the man." And so I went to watch him in Pittsburgh every month because I knew that he had a tough fight on his hands and I had to be up there to support him. Well, there's nobody like that for people to get behind today because they're gone. Just when they get a chance to say, "Ricky Steamboat & Shane Douglas, they're a damn good tag team, I'm going to get behind them," then they're broken up. So now they're looking for somebody else. And it's sure as hell they're not going to get behind Ric Flair and Arn Anderson. As much as I love both those guys, Ric Flair looks terrible, he's over-the-hill. Arn's 30 pounds overweight. It's like looking at Ali, now. Ali was the greatest boxer of all time, but you sure don't want to see him climb in the ring today. It's the same thing with Flair and Anderson and that whole group of guys. WCW is making a fatal mistake in 1993 by bringing back that old talent and hoping to draw money out of it. It didn't draw three years ago. That will be the death nail in the coffin of WCW, if they continue to push that talent and not draw any new talent.

Clark: With your situation with Ricky Steamboat, the gimmick was that he was an experienced wrestler working with a young, up and coming talent. Was that what it was really like legitimately, and what was it like for you to work with him?

Douglas: Oh, the thing about is that it was completely legitimate. The people realized that Shane Douglas was not on par with Ricky Steamboat. I mean, he's a 17 year veteran. I was an 8 or 9 year veteran. And the people didn't even realize that I was an 8 year veteran because I've been in and out of wrestling so much. It was the Rocky story. It was the tag team that wasn't supposed to get over, that got over. It was the tag team that got over in spite of the fact that WCW didn't let it get over. It was a tag team that people looked at and said, "Hey, these are two clean-cut guys. Two guys that aren't obviously steroided to the gild, that aren't drug users. They're both educated. Ricky Steamboat is known world wide for his strong family values and here's Shane Douglas known as a teacher. You don't come across as a tag team with the painted faces and the gimmicks. That was one of the things I told Ole Anderson. I said, "You know, Ole, it's funny. All Ricky Steamboat and I had to offer is that we're good wrestlers. And imagine that, good wrestlers in the wrestling business, it'd be like being a good baseball player in baseball. We don't paint our faces, we don't wear stupid looking outfits. We just go out and we wrestle. And the people were getting behind us." It's been a long time since the fans have seen a 55 minute match, and been able to get the story being told in that match. And that's also a testament to Brian Pillman and Steve Austin, that we had good matches. But, that is so seldom to see today. There are the million dollar boys--Sting and Vader, and all those guys--they cannot do that 55 minute match. Bill Watts tried to take wrestling back to wrestling, and that was what Ole said he was going to do. Some place along the line they lost that philosophy because they decided to go back with the guys that were the 7-minute-men that could wrestle for 7 or 8 minutes, and that was it, they'd go out there with no story told and there was no philosophy and no psychology towards the matches. It was just, "I'll beat you up, you beat me up, and then we'll take the match home, and that will be it." But, Steamboat taught me the psychology of the match. I don't think there is any argument that Steamboat is probably the best, not only right now but probably of all time, as far as psychology goes in a ring. I was fortunate to be able to be with him and learn that. As far as what kind of experience it was, being a student for all my life and being a teacher now, to me it was like picking up a book every night and reading it. A "How to be a Wrestler" book. I watched him every night in the ring and I think to myself, "My God, why didn't I do it that way before?" So I learned from him every night, and I think after six months of being with him, I think I'm five times the wrestler that I was six months ago before we started teaming. Again, unfortunately, we weren't in the clique. Rick wasn't in the clique with somebody in the office and I wasn't in a clique with somebody, so ultimately, we got pushed to the backside in lieu for Dustin Rhodes and the Barry Windhams and the Erik Watts and the other people that were in the clique. And that was unfortunate for WCW. I'm not saying just for us. There's a ton of talent in WCW that's being grossly overlooked--Brad Armstrong, Tom Zenk, people that are great wrestlers, very, very athletic, look good, but because they're not in that clique and the nepotism doesn't kick in for them, they'll be preliminary guys. And that

is not right.

Clark: It looked like you were excited to be at WCW and interested in learning and improving and you guys had the some of the best matches. Do you think WCW noticed that or appreciated that?

Douglas: The TBS people, no, I don't think they understood it. I think they're being led blind by the people like the Dusty Rhodes' and those people. I think they're taking what they say as gospel truth. And the funny thing about that is, Dusty Rhodes and Ole Anderson both have a history with WCW for having run it into the ground. If I give you my store, and I say to run it for me, and you run it into the ground almost to bankrupcy, I can't imagine me giving it to you a year from now. I don't see me getting it back on its feet and saying, "Here, go ahead and take it again and see what you do with it this time." That shows their philosophy. That shows where they're screwed up. They supposedly read *The Wrestling Observer*, and we always had great write-ups on our matches. I think a lot of times I was put across as being a troublemaker in the dressing room because I would say what was on my mind. Ricky would do the same thing. Point blank, we weren't ass-kissers. All we would do is go out and do our match and do it well every night and bust our ass, and we were fortunate enough to work with people that did the same thing. Pillman and Austin were the two most disgruntled people about hearing that Ricky and I were being split up, and that I was leaving, because to them, they were losing their workout partners also. And now, unfortunately, they're going to be fed to Arn and Ric, and I think it's a shame because they're a much better tag team. Let's face it, in every sport, the greats get old and it's time for somebody else to come and move in. It's happened through the history of baseball, football, hockey, soccer, basketball, boxing, it doesn't matter what sport you look at. For some reason, in wrestling, you can't get rid of those old-timers. It's like getting rid of AIDS. They're like a plague that you cannot get rid of. To me, I wouldn't want to be 43 years old, stepping into the ring, and people going, "Boy, he used to be great." To me, that would be embarrassing. I want people sitting down and looking to say, "Man, Shane Douglas is a great wrestler, and he was smart enough to step aside when he was no good anymore." But, they don't see that and they're trying to hold onto that one last cheer from the crowd or that one last paycheck or whatever, and it's sort of sad.

Clark: Did it frustrate you a lot that you know you improved so much and that your matches were getting over all the time, but that you really weren't being appreciated?

Douglas: Sure, oh yeah. It was very frustrating for me because at the time I was renegotiating my contract, and I was the lowest paid man in the company, and to see that a Dustin Rhodes or an Erik Watts would go out and get paid more money than me because of who they were and not what they were in the ring, was very frustrating for me. Like I said, being educated, I was always ready for the work ethic--"The better you are, the better you'll be paid." In every other major sport you have that type of pay system. Barry Bonds in the best baseball player in baseball, he gets paid the best. But to see because Rick and I weren't involved in the clique, we weren't the partiers, we didn't go out and party with Dusty Rhodes at the bar until 2 a.m. or go to the country western bar and make fools out of ourselves, we'd go back to our hotel room. We weren't afforded the opportunity to get pushed. That is the one thing that will kill wrestling today. That was one thing that was missing 20 years ago. There were people that were involved that were friends with the booker and stuff like that, but it sure as hell wasn't as nepotistic as it is today, just from what Domenic and Bruno tells me. And they see it today, and they laugh at the sport. They really found it amazing that there's athletes involved in the sport that can't get pushed because of that. Because in their day, if you were a good wrestler, the promoter would see that, and you were picked up. But, it's changed.

Clark: From all the things you've said about the way WCW runs their company, how would you see that differing from the way Vince McMahon runs the WWF?

Douglas: First of all, Vince McMahon is the man in charge in WWF. In WCW, I dare you to find a person that's in charge. Vince McMahon is a businessman. And he doesn't have a son that's wrestling. He's not as nepotistic from what I've seen from working with him. He looks at a guy like Mr. Perfect, and says, "Mr. Perfect can bust his ass the ring, can have great matches, and can draw me money. Push him." There's none of that stuff, "Well, he's my best friend's son, he can't wrestle a lick, but we're going to push the guy because he's my best friend's son." He doesn't do that. That is basically the only difference between the two companies. One goes with talent because they know it will draw and the other goes with talent because they know somebody. And that's never worked in any business and it certainly won't work in a sport where the people are looking for excitement.

Clark: Do you think that side of the wrestling business is really out of touch of reality, or do you think that's pretty common in America?

Douglas: No, I think that's as backwards. The car industry in this country almost lost its ass because they were trying to tell Americans what kind of cars they wanted instead of listening to what kind of cars they wanted, and making the kind of cars that they wanted. In wrestling, in WCW especially, they're looking and saying, "We know that you want a young, exciting wrestler like a Shane Douglas or a Ricky Steamboat as a tag team, but we're going to give you an Erik Watts instead. And by golly, you're going to like him. And we're going to push him until you like him, and that's all there is to it." As a result, it used to be that you'd have to walk across the room to change the TV, today we've got remote controls. And people go, "Well, f--k that, I can't stand Erik Watts. He's a piece of s--t." Boom, and they hit the change button. So that is going to be the downfall. I don't think that's indicative of America today, I think that's indicative of WCW. It's countered what we're seeing in America. I mean, American car companies, American steel industries, and all these other companies have busted their ass to become competitors. And they're excelling because of it. As a corporate America goes, WCW is being left in the dust because they're not listening to the pulse of America.

Clark: From following wrestling as a kid growing up yourself, how would you say the sport or the business has changed? And are you saddened by what's happened to it?

Douglas: Oh yes, very much so. In fact, we were watching some tapes last night, and Carla, my wife, said, "It's different. What's different about it?" It's different, but she couldn't place what it was. And I said, "Very few wrestlers today know what psychology is. Very few wrestlers know what it means, like Rick and I would do, go out and tell a story. People have stayed tuned in to the soap operas for 30 years at a time because they keep them interested. The only reason they keep them interested--it's the same characters--they keep them interested with the storylines. WCW will not tell a storyline. They say, "Okay, this guy's a tough wrestler and this guy's a tough wrestler, and they're going to wrestle each other next week on a pay-per-view, so buy it." Well, there's story told. Why are these two guys fighting? What's the reason they're fighting? Who stole whose wife? Who tried to put who out of wrestling? I mean, there's no reason for any of these matches. The last pay-per-view, Slamboree, why in the world was British Bulldog fighting for the world championship? There was no reason at all for it. And the fans realized that.

Clark: The thing that really fascinates me is, doesn't WCW try and work with the wrestlers hand-in-hand to teach them psychology or work with them?

Douglas: No. In fact, it's gone the other way. Let's jump back 20 years when Ric Flair was breaking into the business. The Lou Thesz', the Dory Funk Jr's., the Verne Gagne's, and that group of people were teaching him psychology from the very start. This generation of wrestlers has gotten so damn greedy that they're afraid to teach the psychology to the younger wrestlers. They're using that as their weapon

to keep themselves in positions in strength because they can go to the company and say, "Listen, I've proven myself for twenty years. I can go out and wrestle the match. These guys can't. They can go out and do moves but they can't wrestle with the psychology." Like Scorpio for instance. Scorpio hasn't the slightest idea of what psychology in a match is. He can do some of the most incredible moves I've ever seen, but he doesn't know how to put them together. A has to lead to B has to lead to C has to lead to D. You can't jungle it up any other way or you confuse the people. In that way, people like Ric Flair and those guys aren't doing what was done to them. They're not handing down the legacy that they were handed down. And so twenty years from now, if wrestling still survived--I'm predicting that wrestling won't be here twenty years from now the way it is now, unless they make drastic changes--but if it does go downhill and almost completely disappear, that will be the legacy that Ric Flair, Ole Anderson, Dusty Rhodes, and that whole group of people will have to live with. That they killed a sport that was great to them, great to the generation of people before them, and they screwed it up for their generation after them.

Clark: It just really surprises me that they have great talent that could become excellent talent with the psychology. But WCW has no one there to help them with that?

Douglas: No. That should be Ric Flair's role. That's what Ricky Steamboat's role was to me. He taught me that. I thank him now. He was at my wedding last week, and I thanked him. We'll be life-long friends because of that. Our friendship has gone beyond wrestling. But that's what the Ric Flair's and the Arn Anderson's and the Bobby Eaton's and that whole group of people who've made their big bulk of money, and now are on the down-side of their careers, should be stretching their careers out. Not by trying to stay on top but by trying to help the next generation of wrestlers so they can look back--ten years from now if the business is booming, they can say, "The reason it's booming is because I taught Scorpio how to wrestle, I taught this person and that person, and Bagwell, and Douglas, and all these people." But I don't see it happening. And so, I think the business will die before it will prosper.

Clark: Do you think that with all the young talent starting out on the independent circuits today--I'm sure they can go into wrestling gyms and train--but do you think the wrestling business is going to take a tremendous step backwards because all these guys really won't have been taught psychology?

Douglas: Sure. Domenic Denucci taught me every move there was to know, taught me every reversal there was to know, taught me how to walk to the ring and walk back from the ring, taught me how to look good in the ring. But he didn't teach me all the psychology. You can't learn that except in the ring. That's a big problem today because there's supposedly really only two places to go in wrestling anymore. So that's a big problem. You can begin to see it now perpetuating itself. We have a vicious cycle going on where, like the Tatanka's for instance, he's being pushed and he doesn't know psychology. So what's going to happen is, the people that get pushed behind him and go against him will have to be in the same mode because there's nobody teaching him psychology, so he can't teach anybody after him psychology, because he doesn't know it. So the wrestling sport is going to be really hurting for a long time because it's going to be a lost art form. To learn psychology, somebody--like a Ricky Steamboat did with me--has to be able to get in the ring with you every night and show you how to do it and tell you what you're doing right and wrong. Well, Bruno can't get in the ring now and show somebody. He's beyond that point. The Ric Flair generation is the generation that needs to do it, and they're moving to the point really quickly, within the next two or three or four years, that they'll be beyond the point that they can get in the ring. So then who does it? Who teaches it to you? There's nobody else there to do it.

Clark: Do you think that most of the employees working for WCW, because of the lack of leadership and all the disorganization, do you think most of the employees just really don't care anymore?

Douglas: Oh yeah. There is a feeling in that office and that dressing room--and not just for the wrestlers, I mean, from the wrestlers down to the secretaries and everybody in between--"It's somebody else's worry. Don't worry about it." And that's sad. Like you had mentioned that I looked really excited to be there, I was because I saw a group of talent there, and I thought, "Man, this is the chance to make this place go. We had a great group of talent here."

Clark: They probably have talent on par with what Titan Sports has.

Douglas: I think so too, having worked there. I'd say that from having worked in both places. I speak from experience. But the problem is, Vince can package a piece of talent. He can make a piece of talent that's not great and make people think they're great. Let's face it, Hulk Hogan was not a great wrestler. Hulk Hogan became the biggest phenomenon the sport ever knew because Vince knew how to package him. WCW, if we could draw it back to 1984, and you give WCW Hulk Hogan, as many times as his career was peaking, they wouldn't know how to package him. He would not be the superstar that he his today or was in the 80s and early 90s because they wouldn't know what to do with him. They would push him so far and then they'd beat him for somebody that wasn't even under contract. As a result, making that mistake over and over and over again has weakened the company and made it so fragile that WCW really is like a puzzle waiting to fall apart into pieces, literally. Dusty Rhodes will tell you how many times he's a genius. Well to me a genius wouldn't have the company teetering on the brink of bankruptcy. The company has lost, on paper, $12 million a year, five years running now. A genius would have the company turned around. Lee Iacocca was a genius because he took a company from the brink of bankruptcy and made it a multi-billion dollar business. That's genius. Dusty Rhodes is not a genius. He took a company that could have been a multi-million dollar business and has taken it to the brink of bankruptcy. The Ole Anderson's and all the rest of them, they'll all point the fingers to people like me and say, "It's your fault." The only thing I can say is, I'm not the man making the decisions. I don't decide who wins and loses. I don't decide who gets pushed. I don't decide who's going to go over. I don't decide who's going to have the belts. The ultimate blame does not involve a Shane Douglas or Ricky Steamboat or Tom Zenk or Brad Armstrong or any of us, it lies with people in the office. So when it goes down, that will be their legacy. They'll have to live with themselves for it. That was the one thing I told Ole when I left. I said, "Ole, I can look myself in the mirror and be proud of my accomplishments in this sport because I did it on my own. I didn't do it with kissing somebody's ass, like yours. I didn't do it because my dad was the booker. I didn't do it because I was a homosexual and sucked somebody's d--k. I didn't do it because I bought somebody drugs in the office or got somebody laid in the office. I did it because I was a good wrestler. So I can look myself in the mirror and tell my kids and grandkids, if I ever have them, I did it this way. This guy and this guy and this guy can't say that. This guy did it because he was a homosexual. This guy did it because he bought drugs for somebody in the office. This guy did it because he was screwing somebody in the office. This guy did it because his daddy was the booker. All those people have to ultimately look in the mirror some point down the road and say, "I had a good career, but why did I have a good career?"

Clark: Because of all the things you just mentioned, do you really think that the wrestling business has good values or practices good values?

Douglas: No, and I don't say it begrudgingly and I don't say it in judgement. I say that wrestling is the biggest bunch of misfits, the biggest bunch of thieves, the biggest bunch of two-faced, backstabbing people you'll ever meet. And that's not to say that I haven't met some of the best friends I'll ever have in this world from wrestling. But there are very few people like Ricky Steamboat, like Johnny Ace, like Cactus Jack, that I can look to and say I can trust them sleeping in the bedroom

right next to my wife with me gone. There are very few of them where I can say, "Here's the keys to my house, make yourself comfortable." There are very few that I trust to say, "Okay, listen, here's a secret I want you to keep between me and you." Because the nature of the business is backstabbing. It's always been that way. "You tell me something that nobody else wants to know, I'll stooge you off, so that will get me in good with the booker." Value wise, the wrestling business is probably the manual of "How Not To..." Definitely.

Clark: Do you think the product on television or the basic wrestling product practices good values or teaches the public good values?

Douglas: No. I don't think so at all. When you see a person get beat up on TV, but I don't think that's necessarily wrestling's place to do either. I mean, boxing doesn't teach good values. Very few things on TV do today. I think what we ought to concentrate on is not so much the message that we put out, but being very careful not to put out a negative message, so to speak. Ours is a violent sport and it's violent by nature of what it is. I don't think that we have to be going out there and saying, "Okay, listen, this guy's a good guy because he's a school teacher. So you like him. Or this guy's a bad guy because he's from Iraq. So you have to hate him." I think we have so much of that in the world today, and that's the reason we have riots in Los Angeles and places like Atlanta. Because of that kind of stuff in professional wrestling--"Oh, he's a black man. He must be bad. Or he's from Iraq or he's from overseas, he's a foreigner. So he must be a bad guy." We're seeing it now. They're turning Steve Regal heel. Why is it a foreigner has to be a bad guy? As far as values go, wrestling has been the worst, and not just now, the history of wrestling has been that values are not the type of thing they're pushing. But I don't know so much that it should be either. I don't think everybody looks at football and says, "Football really instills bad family values because they're hitting each other and blowing each other's knees out." I don't think that wrestling needs to be that kind of thing, but by the same token, wrestling puts itself out there to try to do that. They sit themselves out there like, "It's okay for your kids to watch our show because we don't show blood and violence." Well, that's irrelevant as far as wrestling goes.

Clark: You returned last year under the Bill Watts reign of WCW and now you've departed under the Bill Shaw, Ole Anderson, and Dusty Rhodes reign of WCW. Do you think the organization has taken a step backwards since Bill Watts left?

Douglas: Without question. And again, I'm not blowing the trumpet for Bill Watts. I'm simply stating that he was the kind of guy that would go out there, he would make a decision, and live with it. As much as people hated him and disliked him, and there were times that I disliked him, I have respect for the man because he wasn't afraid to go out there and say, "Okay, this is a tough decision that needs to be made, and by gosh, I'm going to make it." Dusty Rhodes, you won't see him near a controversial decision if you tried to tow the fat f--k there. You couldn't do it. Ole Anderson, the same thing, ten miles away from any place there's heat. Mike Graham, no place to be found. Barry Windham, no place to be found. Bill Shaw, Bob Dhue don't know any difference. If you were thinking about getting in a car and driving some place with these guys, and say, "Okay, who's got the directions?" None of them do. None of them want to say, "This is the way to go because if it's not the right way, I might get in trouble and lose my job, so I'll just keep my mouth shut when it comes to controversial decisions." Ole and Dusty sat back and kept quiet and wouldn't open their mouths, and they knew Bill was the kind of guy that would go out there and say what he was feeling and what he was thinking. So that's the easy guy to knock down. The guy that doesn't have true power is going to go out there and say what's on his mind. That was part of my downfall, the fact that I wasn't afraid to say what was on my mind. I think wrestling needed more people like that. The wrestling business is littered with two-faced people because of that very reason. You can say a lot of things about Bill Watts, he's not two-faced. If he doesn't like you, by gosh, he'll walk up to you and tell you he doesn't like you. I don't think that's a weakness, I think that's a strength. And I think that wrestling could use more of it.

Clark: From working for the company for the past year, where do you see WCW going in the future? A year from now and then five years from now.

Douglas: I'll make a prediction. Declining houses, continuing to decline. Ricky Steamboat and I, the last time that we wrestled on top in Baltimore, drew an $80,000 house. That was the best that Baltimore had been in quite a while. In fact, it was the best it had been, without a pay-per-view, in probably the last four or five years. Any time they carried a pay-per-view there, naturally it would draw a big crowd. Whenever you look at that and see where the houses are going now, the prediction would be that they're moving in the downward direction. They're going to continue to move in the downward direction because they have people like Dick Slater and JYD on top instead of younger wrestlers with talent. If I were a wrestler in WCW and had the opportunity to go to the WWF, I would go to the WWF as soon as the opportunity arose because it's a sinking ship. The funny thing about it is, the people that are screwing it are the people that are in the most volatile and most vulnerable job of all. Dusty Rhodes, his head is on the chopping block constantly. And so for him to think that he's got this strong position that he can do whatever he wants, he's making a big mistake because he's putting himself out now to be the Bill Watts, to get chopped like Bill Watts did. If I could get out of there (WCW), I'd get out of there as soon as I could.

Clark: Are there a lot of wrestlers in there now that are looking towards other things?

Douglas: Oh yeah. I don't want to say any names and get anybody else in trouble with the organization. But, I know several of the top, if not top pieces, certainly several of the best of pieces of talent that WCW has, are looking to leave. WCW, to carry on with my prediction, I'll say that they're going to continue decreasing houses, declining houses, and you're going to see an outflow of talent that they need and an inflow of talent that they don't need. They don't need anymore Arn Anderson's and Ric Flair's, they need more Brian Pillman's and Steve Austin's, and they don't have that coming. That's going to be the prediction for the next year. Five years from now, WCW will be gone. Ted Turner won't own it anymore, and he'll either sell it or it will go bankrupt.

Clark: It seems there is a different style of wrestlers being pushed now in WCW like Davey Boy Smith, Sid Vicious, Sting, and Big Van Vader. Do you think this is because they're going back to the old concept that bigger is better?

Douglas: I have no idea. I think they're doing it with the "throw the dart" approach. "Who's available? See if we can get him, pay him whatever they want. If they come in and work out, fine. If they don't, fine." I don't think there's any long-term planning going on. I think they're just doing it haphazardly.

Clark: When Bill Watts came in he started the developmental towns to help bring up new talent and give then experience. Where else are new wrestlers able to wrestle and learn their trade?

Douglas: There is no place. As a result, five years from now the wrestling business is going to be bankrupt on talent. There's no young talent to come in. There's none of us that get in the ring for WCW, there's nobody that gets in the ring for WWF that did that from the first day they were in the sport. That's with years of learning. And there's no place to learn it now. So unfortunately, it's going to come down to not knowing. And five or ten years from now, there's going to be wrestlers that don't know how to do it. For true aficionados of the sport, for people who grew up watching it and really loving it, it's sort of sad to think that the future of the sport has been put in the hands of people like Dusty Rhodes.

Clark: Looking at the state the wrestling business is in, to young athletes who are looking to get into wrestling, would you suggest they get into wrestling?

Douglas: No. In fact, I had a guy yesterday ask me for the phone number of Domenic's gym because he knew a person that wanted to get in. I said, "Tell him to do anything else but wrestling." If I had a kid, there's no way that I'd allow my kid to get into wrestling today, not to have their future and their fate dealt with by Dusty Rhodes or Ole Anderson or people like that. The world's a tough enough place as it is, but to have to work with idiots like that, it makes it just too much tougher. I'll certainly tell people, if you have the opportunity to go into other sports or go and get an education or go into wrestling, I would say do anything else but the wrestling.

Clark: After working with Brian Pillman and Steve Austin in WCW, what are your personal opinions of them both as wrestlers and as people to work with and associate with?

Douglas: As wrestlers I think they've got great potential, great potential to get as good as WCW will allow them to get. Really, the shy's the limit for how good they'll both get. They'll only be held down by what WCW allows them to do and not allows them to do. As far as personalities, they're both good guys. Both of them have worked hard to get to where they are today. And I've got a lot of respect for them both as wrestlers and as people, and I'm glad that I had a chance to work with them.

Clark: Do you think those kinds of talented workers, not necessarily just big guys, will be the future of the wrestling business when they are really pushed?

Douglas: Oh, yes. I think that the 300 pound wrestlers that don't know what they're doing in the ring, the two big immovable objects meeting each other, I think that those days are gone. People have seen enough of that, and today they want to see the high-flying action-packed matches that have a story being told in them. And there's very few people that can do that today.

Clark: Since you are a smaller-sized wrestler, was there ever a time in your career where there was the thought in your mind that bigger is better and that you had to be a bigger person to make it in wrestling?

Douglas: Oh, sure. Whenever I went to the WWF I'd gorge myself with as much food as I could get and busted my ass as hard as I could bust it in the gym and took every amino acid known to man, trying to gain size and got to 249, and I really wasn't comfortable with that weight. I couldn't do any of the things that Shane Douglas could do so I subsequently dropped my weight back down because I wasn't comfortable at 249. But sure, it was a big complex for me to be in the ring with 300 pound guys or 280 pound guys and there I was at 230, 225. I was like the midget on the block. Hopefully, if I've left no other legacy to this sport, if I leave it permanently, which I think I will, if I've left no other legacy than the fact that small guys can go in and do it and do more exciting matches than the bigger guys can do, and I opened the door and laid the foundation for other wrestlers my size and my style to go in and wrestle, then I'll be happy with that.

Clark: Do you think that the bigger is better thought or that whole image is the main reason a lot of the wrestlers have gone into taking steroids?

Douglas: Sure. They saw the money that Hulk Hogan made and people that wrestled Hulk Hogan made, and that's definitely the reason why steroids have gotten so big. And as a result, it's ruined a lot of lives. I mean, look at Kerry Von Erich, look at the people that have been arrested from it, look at the Grand Juries that have been investigating it. There's been a lot of lives ruined and shaken up over the steroid thing and the drug thing in wrestling.

Clark: From your experience at WCW, what kind of steroid use is there now? Without mentioning any names, is that still around?

Douglas: Yes. It's still widespread. And WCW pays lip service to drug testing, yet there's no real drug testing that goes on. There was one test the whole time that I was there and I knew that there were people that were on steroids that told me they were on steroids that passed the test. So it's lip service being paid to it. They're trying to keep the big bear off their back that's on Vince's back. And it's just a matter of time before they come.

Clark: Do you think that the steroid use in wrestling over the past ten years--we were talking about portraying bad values earlier--was a terrible thing to display to children and other young athletes?

Douglas: Sure. You've got Hulk Hogan that's sitting there telling the kids to say their prayers, take their vitamins, and do this and do that, but he doesn't tell them that he took steroids to get that big, and that's how he became Hulk Hogan. I think it's really the wrong story to be told. If you're going to tell a kid, as a role model, and I say this speaking from the fact that I think at one point I was possibly in the position of being a role model, the fact that I've also been in the classroom, and I know what the kids look up to, the kids look up to anybody that's going to talk to them on whatever level. If Madonna comes out and says it okay to stick your finger in yourself, then every girl in the country thinks it's okay to stick your finger in yourself. If it's okay for Michael Jackson to grab himself on TV, then every guy in the country thinks it's okay to grab himself. If it's okay for Hulk Hogan to take steroids to get big and make money in wrestling--it doesn't matter, kids don't want to hear that they could drop dead with using steroids, they don't want to hear that their heart could enlarge and be damaged by steroids, they don't want to hear that it can cause jaundice and other kidney and liver failure problems, or cancer. Because kids, they think they're invulnerable. "There's nothing going to hurt a kid at 16 years old." So to tell a kid those kinds of things is irrelevant, especially if it's a kid growing up who's in poverty or in a bad part of town. If you say, "You can take steroids and become 300 pounds, and by gosh, you'll be a millionaire if you can wrestle like Hulk Hogan," how are you going to tell that kid that that's not right? You can't tell that kid that it's not right. The sad part about it is, they think because of the controversy with it, they think that all wrestlers have used steroids. I've had umpteen kids come up to me and say, "Come on Mr. Martin, I know you've had to take steroids." And, well, I haven't taken a steroid. That's part of the reason that I'm not 280 and making a million dollars a year. It's been a real bad down-side for me personally in the wrestling business, and I think it's been real bad for wrestling in general. And it's been very bad for the kids watching it.

Clark: So you've never even tried steroids before?

Douglas: No. I thought about it because the lure was there, because of the sport, the way it is. But, I've never used them and I'm glad to look back now and say that I didn't. God only knows what kind of problems these guys are going to start having fifteen, twenty years down the road. And not just from wrestling, I'm talking from football, baseball, hockey, and all the major sports.

Clark: Why exactly did you leave WCW?

Douglas: I left WCW on an injury. I had a rotator cuff tear and a separated shoulder. At the time I had been renegotiating my contract, and I gave them an ultimatum date. I said if by June 8 I don't have a new contract on the table, June 9 I'm done. The decision to leave WCW, contrary to anything that they're saying or will say, I'm sure, is that Shane Douglas made the decision to leave WCW. They wanted to keep me there and they wanted to keep negotiating the contract point. And I simply told them that I wasn't going to negotiate past June 8.

Clark: Now that you just got married last week, have your goals and

the priorities in your life changed?

Douglas: Oh, certainly. In fact, I was telling Carla yesterday, it's different this time. Every time I've left the road before, even though I didn't miss the road, I missed the competition of wrestling. I'll be 30 this November. I don't know if it's that the fire is gone or what, I don't have the desire right now to step into the ring and compete against somebody. And I don't know if it's because I've gotten married or if it's because I've had a sour taste in my mouth for the wrestling sport. I don't know what it is, or if it's just a combination of all of those things. But right now, I don't have any desire to put the boots on. I've got my boots sitting right in my closet right now. I've got no desire to put them on and wrestle in the ring right now. And I'm not saying that it will be that way five years from now or five months from now or even five weeks from now, I may want to get back to wrestling. But as it stands today, in the beginning of June, I've got no desire at all to climb back in the ring. And especially, I've got no stomach at all to put up with the kind of s--t that Ole Anderson and Dusty Rhodes want to dish out.

Clark: Are you looking into having a family at all?

Douglas: Oh sure, down the road. Carla, my wife, is considerably younger. She's five years younger than me, so there's no rush for us to have kids. And both of us want to wait a while before we do it. We want to enjoy ourselves and enjoy our relationship first and then go on and have a family later.

Clark: Before you returned to WCW last July, were you thinking that you were going to be in the wrestling business for five or ten more years, or something long-term?

Douglas: Well, I didn't know. It was sort of a hit or miss thing for me. I went in, and like you had mentioned, I was really enjoying myself with it and I was really loving wrestling at that time. It was the first time that I had made money. It was the first time that I really felt that my abilities were being taken advantage of and that I was being used the way that I thought I should have been used before. But as soon as Bill Watts left, that changed. So my priorities changed. Whenever I saw that I wasn't going to get the push that I thought I was deserving of because my daddy wasn't the booker, so to speak, at that point, it changed quickly. Suddenly, all the bad feelings that I had about wrestling from before came flooding back. And from that point I sort of lost the desire to compete. I just don't have the stomach to deal with people like Mike Graham, Barry Windham, Ole Anderson, and Dusty Rhodes. To talk to these people, I'd rather sit down and talk to a pile of rocks than I would to them, because it's about the same thing. They think they're so smart and they try to double-talk with you. Some of the wrestlers may fall for it and don't know what they're doing. I take it like a slap in the face, like, "I'm going to try to talk above your head, and you won't understand me." Well, don't hand me that s--t. Talk to me face to face, give me whatever you want to tell me, as bad or as good as it is, and I'll follow you on it. Don't sit there and think that you're talking above my head and that I don't know what you're saying, and be condescending to me. That to me is the one thing that I've really never had the stomach for. And in wrestling there's an abundance of it.

Clark: Since you didn't really seem to have these problems with the WWF, if there were offers made by them, would you think about going back to work there? Or is it that you just want to put your wrestling career on hold for now?

Douglas: It would be a possibility. Like I said earlier, if I get the teaching job, I'm back to teaching full-time. I would have no reservations about going back to work for WWF. There's none of the personal feelings of hate, distrust, or hatred for the group of people running it up there like I had for WCW. But at this point, I can't speak for five weeks down the road from now. But right now as it stands, I've got no taste to want to climb back in the ring. They would have to make it worth my while and make it interesting for me to come back. More so than just the spot I had before, the middle of the card type of spot, that's not interesting to me. To me, to go back up there and be the middle of the card kind of guy, I'd rather teach school. It would have to be awful enticing for me to want to go back to wrestling at this point.

Clark: Since you follow politics, what are your opinions about the direction our country is going in under the presidency of Bill Clinton?

Douglas: I think America is getting exactly what it paid for or what it asked for. It asked for a President with no experience. It voted for a person who was running for President with no experience. And we're getting a taste of that now. We have no foreign policy to speak of. We have no direction at all on economics. He's telling us he's going to cut the deficit, but he does it by saying he's cutting $50 billion out of a budget and adding $250 billion more in spending. To me, $50 billion minus $50 billion plus $250 billion equals the $200 billion gained. So the basic mathematics is flawed from the very start. We have a President who's more concerned with pleasing homosexual groups and every little special interest group that he can please, instead of going out and doing what's right. To draw a comparison, Ronald Reagan, who's really a hero of mine as far as politics go, he may not have been the strongest President ever, but he was a man who was strong on his convictions and he stuck to them through all eight years of his presidency, never waivered. Bill Clinton has waivered week in and week out already on just about every issue he campaigned on. I think we're getting exactly what we paid for, and it wasn't much. We have four years of it, but we're stuck with it right now.

Clark: (laughs) How do you think this compares to WCW's direction?

Douglas: (laughs) Very similar. It's very similar from a direction of having inept people run it. You can see what happens when you get inexperienced, inept people doing a certain job. It just leads to failure.

Clark: Who were some of the wrestlers you looked up to growing up?

Douglas: Bruno Sammartino, Domenic Denucci, I was big fans of them. I was a big fan of Andre the Giant growing up. Pat Patterson, when he was wrestling. There were a ton of wrestlers that right now I can't even think of off the top of my head, that I had a world of admiration for. After getting into the wrestling business, I remember sitting in the dressing room looking around the dressing room, thinking to myself, "There aren't those type of people here anymore. The business doesn't have those types of wrestlers anymore." And I think that's part of the big problem. They were wrestlers that had learned their craft from start to finish. And today we're inundated with a bunch of wrestlers who have learned the craft halfway and don't know the other half. And there's nobody teaching them the other half.

Clark: Who else have you run across in the business who you have learned from or people who taught you or helped you, and people you might have become friends with in the wrestling business?

Clark: I learned a lot from Bobby Eaton. I learned a lot from Arn Anderson, having worked with him. I've learned a lot from a lot of wrestlers that don't know it, from watching them. I would sit down and watch the monitor. It wasn't a form of entertainment for me, it was a form of learning for me. Whereas some of the people would be talking in the dressing room about the rat that they were going to lay tonight or the drugs they were going to do or the drink they were going to drink. I was watching the monitor and watching the wrestlers and watching their moves and their psychology and their positioning and all of that, instead of worrying about all the other partying and girl chasing. So that was never my deal on the road. I guess I was sort of more clear-headed to the whole thing than some of the other wrestlers were. Without a doubt, Ricky Steamboat was the main person in my career. Ricky and Domenic both, and Bruno, having watched tapes of Bruno.

Clark: From spending so much time with Ricky Steamboat and the

close relationship you have with him, would you say that he's the kind of person that's far and few between in this business as far as having good values?

Douglas: He's one of a kind. He's one of a kind in this sport. Bruno, I would say, would be the closet other person, and Domenic, of course, that I could trust and was really caring. But, as far as people that I've worked with on a day in and day out basis, Steamboat is the only person that I could give $500,000 and say, "Here, hold this for me for five years," and come back, and there would be all the money there plus interest. He's a true gentleman. He's a true friend. And I'll love him forever for what he taught me and for having been so faithful and honest and up front with me. That's something that you don't come by in this business very often. It is sad, but it also makes a relationship like mine and Rick's all that much more positive because it does come so seldom that when it does come, you can really cherish it and treasure it for a long time.

WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION

Superstars television tapings were held at Wilkes University in Wilkes-Barre, PA on 7/6 in front of a sold out crowd of about 3,000. They handed out flags to everybody for them to wave when the announcer programed the audience to chant "Luger, Luger," obviously the beginning of the company's major focus on building up Lex Luger to attempt to fill the void that Hulk Hogan's departure leaves. Ludwig Borga (Tony Halme) debuted and was announced as being from Finland and of course did an anti-USA gimmick that got over pretty good since most of the fans are now in the patriotic mood because of all the recent heat surrounding Yokozuna. Jacques Rougeau returned teaming with a new wrestler named Pierre that was trained in Canada. They both wear the Mountie outfits and come down to the Mountie music but are called The Quebecers. Nikolai Volkoff returned and beat Barry Horowitz. Chuck Williams (Rockin Rebel from ECW) got a tryout and lost to Glen Ruth (The Spider from WWA). Well Done (Rex King and Steve Doll from the USWA), Timothy Well and Steve Dunn, lost in a competitive match with The Smoking Gunns. Randy Savage beat Shawn Michaels by DQ after the referee reversed his original decision of Michaels winning by countout when Mr. Perfect came out to the ring and informed the ref that Diesel had thrown Savage into the ring post, which caused Savage to get counted out. After the ref reversed the decision, Diesel was thrown out of the ring and Perfect perfectplexed Michaels, followed by Savage dropping an elbow off the top rope onto Michaels, and Perfect then counted Michaels' shoulders down with Savage covering him. Luna Vachon wrestled Sensational Sherri to a no-contest as Bam Bam Bigelow and Luna were harassing Sherri until Tatanka came out and cleared the ring after a brawl with Bigelow. In the final match of the night, Bret Hart beat Yokozuna by DQ after Mr. Fuji interfered. Afterwards, Yokozuna squashed Hart off the second rope and was going to do it again until Luger came out in jeans and knocked him out of the ring with a forearm shot to probably the loudest pop of the night. Luger then helped Hart up and left the ring area. In other non-squash matches, Rick & Scott Steiner beat Money Inc by DQ, 1-2-3 Kid beat Damian Demento with a legdrop off the top rope, and Undertaker beat Mr. Hughes after a chokeslam.

Challenge tapings were held the next night, 7/7, at the Wicomico Youth & Civic Center in Salisbury, MD in front of about 3,700 fans (building holds about 5,800). In non-squash matches, Tatanka cleanly pinned Adam Bomb with his finisher, Mr. Perfect beat Bastion Booger, Shawn Michaels beat Perfect after a superkick in an excellent and suspenseful match, The Steiners & Tatanka beat Well Done & Blake Beverly when Tatanka pinned Beverly as the tag teams were battling outside the ring, Marty Janetty beat Papa Shango, Undertaker beat Mr. Hughes, and Bret Hart beat Yokozuna by DQ with Luger running to Hart's rescue after the match. In a match taped for Challenge, 1-2-3 Kid beat Ted DiBiase in about 4:00. Before the match, DiBiase explained to the crowd that this match was taking place because he wanted to show Razor Ramon how stupid he was for losing the match and the money to 1-2-3 Kid. DiBiase had Kid in a sleeper when Razor came out, causing DiBiase to get distracted and let Kid go. Then, DiBiase laid back on Kid's body attempting to pin him, when Kid hooked his arms and pulled DiBiase over for the pin. The road agents came out to hold back DiBiase from Ramon, setting up something between the two at SummerSlam. As a result from a King's Court interview segment, Jerry Lawler beat Owen Hart in a good match after a piledriver. Shane McMahon, Vince's son, got what could be called an interview tryout, as he interviewed Yokozuna and Fuji from the ring about a possible challenge from Lex Luger. Chuck Williams worked again and lost to Barry Horowitz in the opener that got a pretty good reaction from the crowd. Williams got over much better that night, probably only due to the fact that they sent him out with music playing.

Terry Taylor is leaving after the European tour that ends on 8/6. . . Luna Vachon is out with a legit broken wrist that she injured during a match with Sensational Sherri in Atlantic City, NJ on 6/30. They've been announcing Sherri as the winner by forfeit at house shows after the injury occurred. . . In lumberjack matches held at several house shows this past weekend, Bret Hart defeated Lex Luger (his last set of dates he'll work before he starts on his bus tour going to major cities).

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING

As the marathon televison tapings for World Wide Wrestling in Orlando, FL concluded last weekend, WCW has coined the phrase "exposing the business." They taped shows at Disney's MGM Studios 7/7 to 7/10 that will begin airing 8/28 and run into mid-November. They exposed the title changes that will take place before and during the time these shows air. They did not have the titles change hands, they simply had the wrestlers that would be wearing belts later this fall (because they will obviously win them on PPVs, Clashes, or at house shows between now and then) appear with the belts, with no explanation made to the fans attending these events as to why these wrestlers wore belts that they wouldn't be winning until a later date. At this point, Barry Windham is the NWA champion. At the tapings, Ric Flair came out with the belt (assume Flair wins it from Windham at the Beach Blast PPV) and then a day later Rick Rude was wearing the belt (assume Rude wins it from Flair sometime before October). At this point, Steve Austin & Brian Pillman are the WCW/NWA tag team champions. At the tapings, Arn Anderson & Paul Roma were wearing the titles on 7/7 (assume they win the belts from Hollywood Blonds at Beach Blast) and then The Nasty Boys managed by Missy Hyatt were wearing them the next three days (assume they win them from Roma & Anderson before October). At this point, Paul Orndorff is the TV title holder. On 7/7 at these tapings, Ricky Steamboat is the champion (assume he wins it from Orndorff before or around 8/28) and then the following three days Lord Steven Regal has the belt (assume he wins it from Steamboat before October). From all indications, Big Van Vader (who returned on 7/7) is the WCW champion when these shows will air, although Tony Shiavone mysteriously announced Rude as "The World Heavyweight Champion" (not clarifying NWA or WCW) on shows airing in November. WCW also let us in on more of their "future plans" as Bobby Eaton & Chris Benoit turn face in October, The Nasty Boys (heels) were taunting Pillman & Austin (hinting a Hollywood Blonds turn by December), Paul Orndoff & The Equalizer wrestled as a tag team, and Charlie Norris got a tryout.

WCW has scheduled four pay-per-view events to take place in four months (September through December), which will put them at a total of seven events this year on PPV. Fall Brawl on 9/19 will be headlined by a WarGames match with Ric Flair & Sting & Davey Boy Smith & Road Warrior Hawk vs Sid Vicious & Big Van Vader & Harlem Heat. Halloween Havoc on 10/24 will be headlined by Vader vs Cactus Jack (who will have forgotten that he had forgotten everything), Vicious vs Sting, and Flair & Paul Roma vs Hollywood Blonds. Battle Bowl will be on 11/21 and Starrcade will take place in late December.

Please phone in your response (thumbs up, thumbs down, etc) to the Beach Blast PPV on 7/18 anytime after the event to (215)566-3852. THANK YOU.

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